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**SPEECH BY LUIS CABRERA  
BEFORE THE  
CONVENTION, MEXICO, D. F.**

**October 5, 1914**

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# SPEECH BY LUIS CABRERA

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Very few people among the millions of Americans and Europeans understand or appreciate the historic importance of the Aguascalientes Convention. It marks a new epoch in the history of the Mexican people. It is the regeneration of Mexico. But, at this great convention of reconstruction, like all other similar gatherings the great majorities, who silently bore the burden of the conflict, seem to have been totally forgotten.

At the last moment of the gathering of the 130 warriors, who fought for the liberty of Mexico, arose Luis Cabrera, a civilian, and in simple words spoke the mind of the fifteen million of Mexicans who were not represented at that convention. He wasted no words, he shed no tears, in cold and pure logic he showed that it was the great majorities of Mexico—the under dog—that suffered most. He spoke in behalf of that element—the civilians whom the convention would not consider. He does not plead neither does he argue, he gives facts that speak more eloquent than the battles of the soldiers. And the greatest of his arguments is Don Venustiano Carranza, the statesman and civilian, founder of the Constitutionalist party and the inspiration of the revolt against the murderer Huerta.

Senor Cabrera, who for several months was connected with Mr. Rafael Zubaran in his diplomatic work at Washington, D. C., was the only civilian admitted to the convention and who pleaded the cause of the men and women who never bore a rifle.

In an effort of good will and patriotism on the part of the civil elements which are represented in this Convention, several of us have agreed to make a public declaration before this assembly, of being resigned to yield all the work and responsibility of the Convention, to the military elements, since they so desire it. In so doing, we have been prompted, principally, and as has already been stated in the article just read to you, by a spirit of conciliation, and a sincere desire of unification.

Let me now explain why we civilians have an undeniable right of taking part in the political affairs of our country, and why, referring to the work which has to be accomplished in Aguascalientes, we civilians, for political reasons which however are only true at the present moment, consider it a patriotic action to withhold from participating in said assembly.

Many reasons have been given to exclude the civilians from participating in the discussions at Aguascalientes. The most important—and I may say the only reason worthy of being taken into consideration—is that they are a disturbing element. (Laughter). The second reason, is that they do not represent the revolutionary

element, and the third is that in time of war they will not go under fire.

The reason of their obstruction, I shall come to later on—just now I wish to call the attention of the military element to the subject of intervention by the civilians. Military men (and I now refer to such as have already in them the military spirit, because the greater part of military men here present, are not sufficiently militarized) (applause). The military men who are already inoculated with the virus of militarism, become automatons, if they are subordinates, or absolute rulers if they are chiefs. Therefore, any obstacle or interference they find in their way, even when same is to put them on the right track, or advise them of danger, or to give them a better knowledge of facts, they immediately interpret this interference as a hindrance to their aims, and classify it as an obstacle. This results in that, all intervention by a civilian who, accustomed to look at things in a more deliberate way, argues with a military man when the latter throws himself headlong into action—the military man finds this an obstacle, and the civilian instinctively feels the inopportunity of this intervention. Where action is concerned, the military man is right: the civilian hinders. Where politics are concerned, he is not right: the civilian helps. When it is a question of acting, of going ahead and executing measures which have been taken or resolutions which have been adopted, military action must be absolutely free from all civil intervention; but at the time of considering a determination, the military element should not count, and I beg all the military men, who are now in the process of formation, not to see an obstacle in the civil element. It is not credible, nor is it possible, that we, who have been working and straining every effort in our given sphere of action, should now throw obstacles in the way of our own ideals. What we desire, is to see adopted a determined line of action, but before entering into action, we wish to be heard. It is not the purpose of us civilians to obstruct the path of military men.



It has been said, and I understand that it was said by my esteemed colleague General Coss, that when the military men carried on the revolution, they did not ask the advice of the civilians, and that now that they are trying to work out the political problems which beset us, they do not want the opinion of the civilians, either. General Coss is right, whenever it is a question of action. But he will admit that while the military men were waging battles in Sonora, or Chihuahua; or Coahuila, there were civilians who were constantly working to facilitate the work of the military men. There was the first of the civilians, Don Venustiano Carranza, working in that sense, and he was completely surrounded by civilians. Civilians of another category were working at other tasks. Others of us civilians were occupied at the humble task to which military men give no importance whatever, and that is: the propagating and making clear of the revolutionary ideas. The civil element was everywhere. It was they who had charge of the organization of the Customs, Mails, Telegraphs, etc. The staffs of Obregon, Luis Blanco, Pablo Gonzalez, were all composed of civilians. To say that the civil element did not assist in the revolution, would be like saying that the Red Cross did not help any during the war, nor its doctors lend any service. No, gentlemen, civilians *must* be heard, for they have contributed and shall continue to contribute, to the triumph of the revolution.

The present government is a military government, but it must be admitted that those who surround Don Venustiano Carranza are civilians. When they wanted a man for Secretary of War they choose the most civilian of military men, Don Ignacio L. Pesqueira.

But it is not my intention to praise the merits of the civilians. I shall only refer to the third reason above mentioned, that is, that the civilians will not be there at the moment of the fray.

In truth, the civilians will not be there at the moment of the fray, and as, in all probability, the only solution at which the Aguascalientes Convention will arrive will be another war, another military action; the civilians, though they will not be in the battles, will nevertheless share the responsibility and dangers. They will not be under fire and in the midst of the hand to hand battles, but this is one of the few reasons which can be given for their elimination from the side of the military men. But I beg to call your attention to the circumstance that, although it is the military element which intervenes more directly in the political questions of

a country, in history it is always civilians who have borne the greatest responsibilities. Civilians have always had the good fortune or misfortune, of being the ones to shoulder the responsibilities of the success or failure of the revolution. Whatever be the activities of the military elements in this revolution, the one responsible for the final result will be Don Venustiano Carranza who is a civilian. Whatever may have been the responsibilities of the military elements which were with Juarez, now that we are looking at that epic from a distance, we find that military men have almost disappeared from the field of history, and that the great responsibilities have fallen on the civil elements which surrounded Juarez, and on the civilians who were on the side of reaction.

The civil elements have had the misfortune always to shoulder the biggest responsibilities. During the administration of Don Francisco I. Madero, the strongest military elements which supported him, are still alive—it was the civil elements that were sacrificed. (Applause). The life of the Secretary of War, under Don Francisco I. Madero, was respected. The military commanders, such as Villar, Angeles, are still alive. Gustavo Madero was a civilian, he did not even have a political position in the government, and he was the first victim. José Maria Pino Suarez was, of all the Ministers of Francisco I. Madero, the one who exercised the least political influence in the course of events. He was the Minister who was least able to influence the determinations of Don Francisco I. Madero, because the policy of Francisco I. Madero was controlled by his relatives, Don Rafael Hernandez, Don Ernesto Madero, and Don Jaime Gurza—but when the time came for shouldering responsibilities, Henry Lane Wilson spread the banner of the Stars and Strips over these three ministers and declared (for I myself heard him say it) that those were the only honest men in the Government staff of Mr. Madero, and he, Wilson, protected and saved them. But José M. Pino Suarez was assassinated and Don Francisco I. Madero was assassinated.

In the present struggle, military men always have behind them five, ten or twenty-thousand men whom they can count on to protect them: civilians have no protection behind them. After the Aguascalientes Convention is over, whether the civilians have taken part in or not, it is they who will suffer the consequences, because they have not behind them a military following to make themselves respected.

GENERAL COSS, interrupting—You also have followers whom you can count on, come with me to the ranks and you will find them. (Hisses).

CITIZEN CABRERA—I beg the audience to allow me to listen to Mr. Coss.

GENERAL COSS—We military men do not want civilians to attend, because in Guadalupe it was not stated that civilians would attend. At the time of the agreement in Torreon, it was not understood that they were to attend at this Convention. It was military men, generals in command of forces, who were to attend. We are not prejudiced against civilians, no, but we object to their presence here because it was not agreed to beforehand, it being understood that only we soldiers who have suffered the pangs of cold and hunger, and carried the blood-covered bodies of our wounded comrades from the fields of battles, were to attend. That is why we object, not because we are prejudiced against them.

CITIZEN CABRERA—I most sincerely thank my colleague, General Coss, for the explanation he has had the kindness to give me, as it refers to one of the points which I was going to take up in elucidating the question of the civilians.

Correct—I, a civilian (and in saying I, it is not in order to bring my personality to the front, but only as an example among many others), I have not behind me any political forces, nor a government position, nor some hundred mausers to protect my life—if I run any danger as a civilian, the most effective protection I could find would be to become a military man. And in this instance I must thank General Coss for the offer he makes me, and I beg to assure him that should it become necessary, I shall not hesitate an instant in putting myself under his military command—choosing, as I shall be obliged to do, between the brigade of General Esteban Marquez, and that of General Antonio Medina, both of which are represented in this assembly, and both operating in the State of Puebla, where I am acquainted even with its remotest lanes.

And passing on to the third objection, I will say that, where military men represent well determined elements, we civilians do not. Every military man represents a certain number of enlisted men, who support him and on whom he can count—while we civilians represent no one in particular. My colleague General Hay has shown a certain lack of memory in transcribing my speeches, but he cannot be blamed, for at

times, even the press stenographers in spite of their notes, suffer from lack of memory.

I do not say that we civilians represent the fifteen million inhabitants of our country. We civilians represent only that which we spontaneously assume. I have never as a politician pretended to represent, nor do I now represent, more than the ideas which, in my opinion, others hold.

When I write, or speak in public, none of the ideas I express are my own—I always try to interpret the feelings of the nation—and whether I have interpreted same correctly, it is not for me to judge. General Coss can well believe that I am not acquainted with the opinion of the military elements, but I *do* know the feelings of innumerable sufferers, miserable, famishing, who are clamouring for bread in this republic, and who have not shouldered rifles.

You, the military men, represent the feelings of men who have had the good fortune, or we may call it the privilege, of having been able to obtain a rifle. I am less pretentious, and am content to represent the desires, the tendencies of all the rest of the people who did not even have a rifle, and who nevertheless were exposed, like all the rest, to the excesses of the Diaz dictatorship. I speak in the name of the millions who, in misery, want their soldier brothers to take them out of the misery in which they are wallowing. It is in their name that I wish to make myself heard, and all these men, sharing my opinion, are content that you should decide the problem—but they demand that, before marching to the front, you should hear them. (Applause).

There are two reasons, fundamental and beyond discussion, one of which was suggested to me the first time by General Blanco, I think, and another by General Buelna, I do not exactly remember which, but I believe they were the originators of these fundamental reasons—two reasons why civilians should not come to Aguascalientes, and which are:

Allow me to come down a little, and to put before you a homely example: Every house-keeper knows that when she has two cooks she has only half a cook. That is to say that, when two energies co-operate together, and in perfect unison in every detail, these two energies are worth two whole units, and this union makes them strong.

But when between the two energies, comes the minutest shadow of discord, then it is better for these two energies not to work together.



If the military men and civilians, now in this assembly, were already in perfect accord in their opinions and ideas, before presenting themselves to another group of men in the north, then our opinion and our greater number would contribute to the greater success of our labors. But if, as we have seen there exist little differences (and differences in opinion I call little) there comes the idea that we civilians might be cumbersome, and, if we are not perfectly in harmony, our differences may become an obstruction when convening with the other elements in Aguascalientes. Therefore, when two men do not arrive at a perfect understanding, the best thing they can do is to agree which of them is to be eliminated. If military men and civilians cannot come to a perfect understanding in the details of our work in Aguascalientes, those who represent the minority and the weaker portion would do well to eliminate ourselves, and the weaker portion, in numbers and strength is now represented by us civilians. We therefore yield the field to the military men.

Another fundamental reason, and which should be taken into consideration to eliminate the civil element, is that of making a precedent, so that the other group of men who are coming from the North, may also eliminate the civilians who are coming among them. (Applause). Not that we believe that the Generals of the Eastern, Western and Central Divisions, have better civil elements co-operating with them, than the Northern division. On the contrary, I affirm that the civil elements which surround the Northern division, are much more intelligent, and above all, richer, than the civil elements with the other divisions—but, I maintain that the civil elements surrounding the Eastern, Western and Central divisions, are greater patriots than those who surround the Northern division.

I also affirm that the civil elements surrounding the Division of the South (and in the term South in general, I include the East, West Center and South) that these elements understand the revolution better than the civil elements of the North, and to corroborate my statement I refer to this Manifest of General Francisco Villa, which beyond the shadow of a doubt, was not produced by him, but by some civilian who pulls the strings from the outside. This Manifest interprets the Revolution in altogether a contrary manner to what we military men and civilians here assembled, understand it. But this I shall take up another time, now I must finish. For the present, I shall restrict myself to rectify

the declaration made by us civilians WE ARE WILLING TO ELIMINATE OURSELVES FROM THE CONVENTION, WHEN THE CONVENTION DECIDES TO ADJOURN TO AGUASCALIENTES, or WHEN A NEW ASSEMBLY IS—CONVENED IN AGUASCALIENTES. We agree, brother soldiers, in that you may carry the brunt of the activity and determination of which you have already given proof, to this coming strife. We are willing that you fight for the success of the revolution, we wish you success—we trust you will be able to interpret correctly, the sentiments of the troops which you have organized, the sentiments and requirements of our native land!

The nation is not composed of civilians, or military men. We are *all* parts of the nation, and the nation is composed principally, of mothers, wives, sisters, children—man is only a shield to protect the weaker portion in the struggle for life.

You soldiers are the strong ones, and to YOU we entrust the success of these negotiations. But, since I am here before you to effect our separation, I cannot let you go, until you have heard, in a brief summary, the aspirations of our country, as I understand them and as they are understood by the suffering millions of our country.

The ambitions of the Mexicans, as expressed in this Manifest, are mean and small.

The great necessities of our country are not of the political order: politics are only a means. The necessities of our country are greater. The necessities of our country in politics are not essentially constitutional and democratic at the present moment. This Manifest of General Villa, which is the key to it, to the resumé of ideas which predominate in the Northern division, this Manifest asks of you, solely and exclusively, to re-establish in all haste, order in this country. You are going to meet a group of men whose motto is the immediate re-establishment of the Constitution, a group of men who do not desire reforms, UNTIL AFTER the constitution is restored, and mark my words, this group of men wants for President of the Republic, a civilian, so that they will be able to manage him.

Our views are not in harmony with this manifest, and just because we do not agree with the Manifest of General Villa, I wish to say (and I promise not to keep you more than ten minutes, if you will be kind enough to give me your attention), I wish to tell you which are, in our

opinion, the ideas and general lines along which you must work at the Convention of Aguascalientes.

Gentlemen, at Aguascalientes you are going to discuss three things: THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT, pre-constitutional or provisional (however you may wish to call it) and its duration.

THE SOCIAL REFORMS which this provisional Government must work out, and THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS PRECONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT, is to make place later on, to a Constitutional Government.

In the course of your debates, you will undoubtedly find yourselves face to face with well-defined ideas, already studied, already prepared, well discussed and may be *even well financed*, which are found on the other side, and which are already briefly outlined in the Manifest sent out by General Villa, in which he refuses to recognize Venustiano Carranza. You are going to discuss the character which the Constitutional Government must assume. Here let me ask those here present not to hesitate to use that unconventional but customary manner in which, such as do not agree with the ideas expressed by the speaker, make it known either by a simple NO, or by standing up from their seats.

I BELIEVE that there must not be a constitutional Government until the social reforms which the country requires, have been accomplished. (Enthusiastic applause).

I BELIEVE that the reforms demanded by our country, if not accomplished now by the strength of your swords, will never be accomplished. (Applause).

I BELIEVE that, if we wish to have a truly lawful and constitutional government, we must make a Constitution that is adequate to our necessities. (Applause).

I BELIEVE that from the activities of the Aguascalientes Convention, there must come out a new Constitutional Congress, which will be as great as, if not greater than, that of 1857, and I believe that this Congress will be the first which in the History of New Spain and Mexico, will set the foundation of a legislature which will harmonize with the blood, race and needs, of the Indian, and not a constitution copied from that of France or the United States. (Bravos, Applause).

It seems to me that the defense of all the reactionaries and conservatives, is that of clamouring for the immediate application of the law,

as soon as they find themselves defeated. (Applause).

I believe that if at the present moment we are to apply a constitutional government, the object of the revolution will be ruined.

The Manifest sent out to the nation by General Villa, disowning Mr. Carranza, is founded solely on this inculation: Don Venustiano Carranza is a dictator, and the Constitutional Government should be established at once.

I am not going to tire you with the lecture of the proclamation, but should you consider it necessary (shouts, applause) then I shall beg the Secretary to give me a minute's respite by reading the proclamation of General Villa.

GENERAL OBREGON—Let the Convention be consulted.

MR. CABRERA—The Convention is always sovereign in its determinations. I beg the President to consult the convention as to whether it desires the reading of the proclamation of General Villa.

THE SECRETARY—The executive board, through the secretary, asks the honorable convention if it requests that the proclamation of General Villa should be read. Those who are in favour of a reading, are requested to stand up. The Convention does not desire a reading. (Hisses).

MR. CABRERA (continues)—Respecting—the decision of the convention, I shall omit all the meditations contained in the three columns of small type, and shall pass on to the resolutions of the proclamation, which speaks in sufficiently clear terms:

(Here Mr. Cabrera read the resolution of the proclamation of General Villa).

First—The Division of the North disowns the authority of Don Venustiano Carranza as First Chief of the Constitutionalist army.

Second—The other divisions of the Constitutionalist army are invited to disown Don Venustiano Carranza as First Chief of the Constitutionalist army.

Third—Once this separation has been obtained, then another civilian shall be designed, who will immediately ask for elections, and who shall deliberate with Congress as to the Reforms demanded by the revolution, and which will be put into effect by the president elect.

Fourth—The Constitution shall be reformed so that the Presidential term shall begin with the time of election.

I want to point out to you this detail, that is to say, the idea of the Division of the North as to the provisional Government: That there should be a constitutional government with a congress even during the provisional Presidency. The Provisional President must call immediately for election, and that the government, which must take upon itself the reforms demanded by the revolution, must be a constitutionally elected government.

This problem will come under your kind consideration, you, Generals in Aguascalientes. You will discuss with the members of the Northern division, the points relative to the question of form and conditions of the provisional government. It is confided to your care to save us from the danger of entering a beautifully gilded cage called "Constitutional Government."

If it be necessary to search for a sign on the brow of each traitor, of each Huertista, each Felicista and each one of the reactionaries, which would indicate who is the enemy of the people, who desires the continuation of the infamous policy of privileges and monopolies in Mexico, I would be satisfied to know them by asking them the following—"Are you in conformity with the re-establishment of the Constitutional Government after the revolution?" (Applause).

Do you realize that the greatest exertions made by a reactionary element against a revolution, have always consisted in the re-establishment of legality? Do you know that during the French revolution, legitimacy was the center of all reaction—that lawfulness is always the axis around which all the reactionaries go round? When you see in Mexico, men who begin to ask for a constitutional Government because we call ourselves Constitutionalists, and they ask that the Government complete the reforms—then you will know that those men desire the defeat of the revolution.

I have said it many times, and I shall never tire of repeating it: the real transcendental reforms of a people have never been obtained by legal means; they have always been retrieved through force. Therefore, military gentlemen, it does not appertain to the Constitutionalist order, nor to a Congress, nor to a legitimately elected government, to carry out reforms. If your swords do not consummate them, it will be many years before they shall come to pass. (Applause). They will put before you, Military gentlemen, all the questions relative to the social necessities; they will propose to you agrarian

reforms, and then you will discover who it is that is clamoring for the respect of property and the absolute necessity of consent for the expropriations of the lands, and those who like myself repeat, as I have done for many years, that the lands must be taken, wherever they are to be found. You will know those who will give the lands and also those who in the solution of the agrarian problem, will want to know how many dollars they can make out of their lands.

They will speak to you, military gentlemen, of economic reforms, and you will identify those who are against them.

They will discuss the religious questions which at the present moment are agitating the country, and you will gaze upon those who, after having expelled the least noxious of the religious orders in our country, nevertheless want to prevent the ejection of the most dangerous ones which are still in our midst. They will harange you on political reforms, and you will perceive those who pretend that a real constitution shall be initiated, or those who demand the re-establishment of our present constitution.

You will hear them discourse on our illustrious forefathers of 1857, and on the necessity of re-establishing before all, our constitution, and oppose the reforms in our constitution with more fervor than the most sincere defenders of the people. You will spy those who desire the continuation of the policy of impositions, subterfuges and electoral frauds which were in force during the thirty-five long years of the period of Diaz. And lastly you will have to dissent, principally, on the form of destruction of the enemy: then you will behold those who will declare that there is no political enemy left in Mexico since Huerta disappeared, and that thereafter neither sacrifices nor justice will be required. That the consolidation of peace is necessary, and as the proclamation of Villa says "The lives and interests of the peaceful people must be respected, of nationals as well as of foreigners."

They will mention the length of the provisional government which is to be established, and as the proclamation of the division of the North says, only within the limit of the time needed for the verification of elections. They will inform you that the elections can take place immediately, as the division of the North offers to re-establish peace and order. They will also ask you on the same grounds that the elections shall be verified after the establishment of peace and order by the Division of the North. Finally,

they will mention the form of a new constitutional government, and nothing else will be mentioned but the re-establishment of the Constitution.

But you know better than I do, you who have been in contact with the humble ones, you, who are conscious of the needs, not of the large cities which possess so many elements of defense, but of the villages and hamlets, that as long as the autonomy of the municipal power is not written in large letters in our constitution, there cannot be any liberty. You shall be, and I entreat you to be, the champions of this idea. When there is a Municipal power, when there exists municipal autonomy, I assure you that, even if there should be other revolutions, the country will be in a position to comply and help itself, without suffering all the horrors of the last one.

When there will be Municipal self-government, you will have real elections; then only will you possess a true democracy. The respect of the sovereignty of the states, the autonomy of the government of each locality will be touched upon, as it came to pass after the triumph of Madero, they will describe the sovereign power of the state as the greatest need of the revolu-

tion. Nevertheless, I tell you, Gentlemen, the reform of the division and the political organization of the states, is absolutely necessary.

It will be said to you, military gentlemen, that our laws do not require any tampering, and that well enough should be left alone, and the reforms of a great many laws will be pointed out to you as dangerous. Then you will come to the realization that there are many men who call themselves revolutionists, and who tremble before a single stroke of the pen which may be scratched into our constitution.

I will not tire you any longer, gentlemen, I only beg to be allowed to put these ideas on record in a more orderly and methodical shape. Meanwhile, we civilians say to you: "Go and solve all these problems." Discuss with the soldiers of the North, the form in which the country shall be saved.

But consider that, if you succeed in your task, you will be covered with glory. Should you fail, part of the responsibility will fall upon your shoulders. The other part will continue to be our share, in spite of the fact that we will not have been present at Aguascalientes. (Prolonged Applause).

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